

VZCZCXRO0198
PP RUEHDE RUEHROV RUEHTRO
DE RUEHNR #1286/01 0791332
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 201332Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8403
INFO RUCNSOM/SOMALIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 4132

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 001286

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR AF/E, AF/RSA, AND DRL/IL
DEPT ALSO PASS TO DEPT OF LABOR FOR SUDHA HALEY, PATRICK WHITE AND
MAUREEN PETTIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ELAB](#) [ECON](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [SO](#)
SUBJECT: Somalia's Labor Sector Needs

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On March 15, Mr. Abdi Abdille, Technical Advisor to Somalia's Labor Minister, gave LabAtt the following priorities for Somalia's labor sector and asked for assistance in addressing them: Creating jobs quickly through labor intensive projects; rebuilding both vocational and academic education institutions; labor law reforms; and, rebuilding the capacity of both the Ministry of Labor and the trade unions. Child labor is rampant due to poverty and lack of educational opportunities. The ILO will fund Somalia's attendance at a tripartite African Labor Conference in Addis Ababa in April to provide an opportunity to request assistance. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) At the suggestion of the regional ILO representative, LabAtt met with Technical Advisor to the Minister of Labor, Mr. Abdi Abdille, on March 15 to discuss Somalia's labor sector and its needs. Abdille said he is a Kenyan working for the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and based in Baidoa, but has not yet been to Mogadishu. He provided the following information.

Create Jobs First

¶3. (U) After 15 years of turmoil, the top labor issue in Somalia is creating employment, especially for young men who have little education, and whose only current opportunity is carrying a gun in a militia. Youth and other vulnerable people, like women heading households, need jobs now. He urged assistance for labor intensive projects including construction and repair of dirt roads, citing a similar ILO project in South Africa. He also praised an ILO project funded by Italy which hired about 200 people to clean litter and debris from the streets of Baidoa, and 1,800 to do the same in Mogadishu.

Train Workers

¶4. (U) Somalia has a high literacy rate (in Somali), but educational and training institutions have deteriorated. Vocational training (VT) programs must be established to train and certify skilled workers in all fields, including ICT. The premier former State-run VT institution is currently operating as a private institution with German assistance. A committee of academics and professionals will be established to certify academic credentials for teachers and instructors, but rebuilding the education system will be a long process.

Reform Labor Laws, Build Labor Sector Capacity

¶5. (U) Somalia's labor laws are a socialist legacy of Siad Barre's government, and must be revised to fit the real world. An employers' federation has been established. A UNDP governance project funded by Norway created a Civil Service Commission that

hired about 10 staff at the Ministry of Labor, but the Ministry lacks almost everything it needs to function. There are no functioning labor unions in Somalia, and the labor federation under Siad Barre was part of the Socialist party. Some union and federation officials may remain in Somalia, but none have come forward yet, and they probably retain the socialist mind-set.

Child Labor Remains Rampant

¶6. (U) Child labor is severe and common. Children break rocks into gravel for construction without any protective gear, and work as vendors of cigarettes and miraa on the streets. Herding and farming with their families is also the norm, but are less hazardous.

Requesting Aid

¶7. (SBU) Abdille said the Minister of Labor was attending a meeting of the Arab Labor Organization, mainly to request assistance. The ILO will fund a Somali delegation to a tripartite African Labor Conference in Addis Ababa in April to begin Somalia's re-integration into the labor sector. ILO SG Somavia will meet the Somali delegation and facilitate requests for labor assistance. The Ministry will draw up project proposals, and Abdille agreed to send copies to LabAtt.

Immediate Assistance Provided

¶8. (U) LabAtt provided names and contact information at the Solidarity Center's Nairobi office so Abdille could request Somalis be included in some labor union training programs. Abdille was aware of the U.S. Department of Labor-funded "Strengthening Labor Relations in East Africa" (SLAREA) project to update and harmonize labor laws within the East African Community (EAC), and had hard copies of Kenya's labor reform bills. LabAtt provided soft copies

NAIROBI 00001286 002 OF 002

to allow Abdille and the Ministry to review them more easily and perhaps use them as the basis for Somali labor reform bills.

RANNEBERGER